

IN THE CLAIMS

1-23. (Canceled)

24. (currently amended) A method for improving the hitting proficiency of a baseball player ~~during a game of baseball~~, consisting of the steps of:

selecting a rubber spherical ball from which a segment has been removed to leave the ball made up ~~comprised~~ of an exterior spherical portion and a flat area, the removed segment being such that a perpendicular line from a center of the flat area to an opposite side of the remaining spherical portion is equal to or between forty-five and fifty-five percent of the original spherical ball diameter;

providing an instructional table illustrating at least one of grips, arm movements and release methods for pitching a baseball;

gripping, by a first user, the ball in a manner according to a value in the instructional table corresponding to a desired standard pitch;

throwing, by the first user, the ball in a manner according to a value in said instructional table corresponding to a desired standard pitch;

releasing, by the first user, the ball in an exaggerated manner according to a value in said instructional table corresponding to a desired standard pitch, a ~~[[the]]~~ second user thereby ascertaining the type of pitch as the ball leaves the hand of the first user;

swinging, by ~~[[a]]~~ the second user, a bat having a substantially constant diameter of approximately 0.75 inches ~~wherein the diameter of the bat is smaller than the diameter of a regulation bat~~ wherein said second user attempts to identify standard pitches associated with arm movements thereby improving the second user's batting skills, said second user developing a skill to ascertain the type of pitch through repetitive practice with a mix of pitches being thrown; ~~and~~ .

~~playing said game according to rules of baseball.~~

25. (previously presented) The method as recited in claim 24, wherein said step of providing the instructional table includes providing techniques for at least one of gripping, throwing, and releasing standard pitches.

26. (previously presented) The method as recited in claim 25, wherein the standard pitches include a fastball in which the ball is gripped vertically and released straight overhand.

27. (previously presented) The method as recited in claim 25, wherein the standard pitches include a knuckleball in which the ball is gripped by placing the flat area of the unit in a palm of a throwing hand and thrown and released straight overhand.

28. (previously presented) The method as recited in claim 25, wherein the standard pitches include a screwball in which the ball is gripped vertically, thrown underhand, and released while twisting a throwing hand to the right for right hand throwers or to the left for left hand throwers.

29. (previously presented) The method as recited in claim 25, wherein the standard pitches include a slider in which the ball is gripped vertically and thrown and released at a three-quarter side arm position.

30. (previously presented) The method as recited in claim 25, wherein the standard pitches include a curveball in which the ball is gripped vertically and thrown and released at a one-half side arm position.

31. (previously presented) The method as recited in claim 25, wherein the standard pitches include a sinkerball in which the ball is gripped vertically and thrown and released at a one-half side arm position.

32. (previously presented) The method as recited in claim 25, wherein the standard pitches include a splitfinger fastball in which the ball is gripped the flat area up and thrown and released at a three-quarter side arm position.

33. (previously presented) The method as recited in claim 25, wherein the standard pitches include a rising fastball in which the ball is gripped with the flat area down, thrown one-half side arm, and released while slightly tilting the ball forward.

34. (new) A method of playing a game of baseball comprising the steps of:  
using a rubber spherical ball from which a segment has been removed to leave the ball made up of an exterior spherical portion and a flat area, the removed segment being such that a perpendicular line from a center of the flat area to an opposite side of the remaining spherical portion is equal to or between forty-five and fifty-five percent of the original spherical ball diameter;

using a bat having a substantially constant diameter of approximately 0.75 inches and having a length of between 38 and 40 inches; and

playing according to the rules of baseball.